

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN
SOUTH VIETNAM

(Information as of 0730 Hours)

5 Nov 63

State Department review completed

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(Information as of 0730 EST)

1. Ngo Dinh Can, former strongman of northern South Vietnam and Diem's younger brother, is being held by coup leaders in Saigon for interrogation, to be followed by trial or exile. He appeared at the US Consulate in Hue yesterday, was flown to Saigon, and turned over to revolutionary authorities under guarantee of fair trial. The aged mother of the Ngo brothers, in failing health, is still in her guarded residence in Hue; there are rumors that she has died.

2. Coup leaders have repeated press reports from the north that Can is detested by the people for his cruelties, and might well have been lynched if the Hue population had had an opportunity. In addition to yesterday's rumors that mass graves of political prisoners had been found on Can's estate, there now are descriptions, confirmed by Consul Helble's personal inspection, of dungeons built into former French ammunition storage buildings on Can's property.

3. Labor leader Tran Quoc Buu was released in the early morning hours Tuesday. Coup leaders had told Ambassador Lodge that he had not been arrested and must have been kidnaped.

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4. Formation of a new provisional government has been announced. Full executive and legislative powers rest with "Big" Minh as chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council. Except for budgetary, tax, defense, and security matters, governmental

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powers in turn are delegated to a cabinet under Premier Tho, the former vice president. His 14-man cabinet, with General Don as Defense Minister, General Oai as Minister of Information, and opportunistic General Ton That Dinh as Minister of Public Security, otherwise comprises largely technicians from the civil service. The Minister of Rural Affairs is a holdover from the Diem cabinet. Former Foreign Minister Vu Van Mau and General Tran Van Minh ("Little Minh")--the latter obviously alarmed over Dinh's role--were originally slated to be Foreign Minister and Minister for Youth respectively.

5. Tran Kim Tuyen, former chief of the Presidential security service who had been leading one of the groups of anti-Diem plotters from quasi-exile, hurried back to Saigon on the heels of the coup and was promptly arrested for plotting a counter coup. At the other extreme, five Viet Cong agents reportedly have been arrested in Saigon. One of them, a girl, had 11 grenades, and said a terrorist outbreak had been planned for 4 November.

6. The curfew has been shortened to three hours in Saigon. Some censorship is still being exerted, as demonstrated by blank spaces in the local newspapers. Most secondary schools appear to have opened, although short on attendance as students continue to display a festive mood.

7. Madame Nhu's three younger children have arrived in Rome, and Mme. Nhu is expected to fly there tomorrow. Vatican officials said Diem's brother, Archbishop Thuc, could probably be persuaded to remain in Rome until the end of the Ecumenical Council, now scheduled to adjourn 5 December. A Vatican official contacted by the US Embassy in Rome agreed that Thuc's return to South Vietnam probably would serve no useful purpose.

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